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LITTLE KNOWN
FACTS ABOUT
THE
GETTYSBURG
ADDRESS





"The Gettysburg Address is a marvelous piece of English composition. The more closely the Address is analyzed, the more one must confess astonishment at its choice of words, the precision of its thought, its simplicity, directness, and effectiveness.

"I escape the task of deciding which is the masterpiece of modern English eloquence by awarding the prize to an American."

—*Lord Curzon, Earl of Kedleston, Chancellor
of the University of Oxford*

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Little Known Facts About The Gettysburg Address

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THE ADDRESS delivered by Abraham Lincoln at the dedicatory exercises of the Gettysburg National Cemetery has been acclaimed the outstanding oration in the Anglo-Saxon tongue. Naturally, any incident which relates to the preparation or the delivery of this masterpiece of eloquence is extremely important. Some of the little known facts about Lincoln's Gettysburg Address are herewith presented.

Gettysburg---Battle and Address

THE Battle of Gettysburg came to a close on the eve of Independence Day, 1863. The famous Gettysburg Address of Abraham Lincoln, however, was not made at the time of this important contest, and the remarks were not inspired by the militia in action. It was those brave men who had given "the last full measure of devotion," which drew from Lincoln the memorable words spoken on November 19, 1863, at the consecration of the Gettysburg National Cemetery.

It was more than four months after the actual conflict that a part of the very field where men had fought was consecrated as a place where men were buried. The din and clamor of battle had

given place to calm and quiet, and in an atmosphere charged with reverence and thoughts of the dead, the requiem pronounced by Abraham Lincoln was heard.

The Occasion

THE unprecedented number of casualties resulting from the decisive battle called for an orderly and decent burial of the dead. David Wills, a citizen of the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, was apparently the first individual to present a satisfactory plan for the general interment of the fallen soldiers, and he was ably supported in his views by the Governor of the state.

Residing in New England, a kinsman of the President, Mayor F. W. Lincoln of Boston, was active in attempting to perfect some organization which would acquire ground on the battlefield where the Union soldiers from Massachusetts might be interred and memorialized. Finally a corporation known as The National Soldiers Cemetery was created, financed by the various states having citizens eligible for burial there. It was this cemetery that President Lincoln was invited to consecrate with dedicatory remarks.

The Chief Executive Invited to Speak

THE Gettysburg program was arranged by the National Soldiers Cemetery Committee, and they selected Edward Everett as the orator for the occasion. The first date set for the exercises was Thursday, October 23, 1863, but Mr. Everett felt he could not be ready to speak so soon as that and then suggested that November 19 would be the earliest possible date on which he could appear. This date was approved.

Officially, Lincoln had no voice in the plans for the celebration as it was not under the jurisdiction of the United States Government. Out of courtesy to him, however, in ample time to prepare the few remarks he was expected to make, he was invited by the

committee in charge to participate in the ceremonies. This request he graciously accepted, apparently without any feeling that his invitation to be present was unduly belated, as is often alleged.

Writing the Immortal Words

IT WAS on November 2, seventeen days before the address, that the invitation to participate in the Gettysburg program reached Lincoln, and knowing his deep interest in the project, one would suggest that he immediately gave some thought to what he might say at the dedication. John Nicolay, one of his secretaries, observes that Lincoln "probably followed his usual habit in such matters, using great deliberation in arranging his thoughts, and moulding his phrases mentally, waiting to reduce them to writing until they had taken satisfactory form."

There is much difference of opinion as to when he found it convenient to write out his address, but all authorities in a position to know his movements in Washington are agreed that the first draft was written before he left the Capitol for Gettysburg. There is no dependable evidence, whatsoever, that indicates he wrote any part of the address on the way to Gettysburg.

That some corrections in his manuscript were made after arriving at Gettysburg, and that the last part of it especially, was rewritten is an assured fact. The writing was done in the home of Mr. Wills where Lincoln was a guest. What is known as the battlefield revision copy is transcribed on two pieces of paper, the first part written in ink and the concluding part written in pencil.

The First Gettysburg Speech

LINCOLN made two addresses at Gettysburg; one is forgotten, the other will always be remembered. The evening on which the President arrived at Gettysburg, he was serenaded at the home

of Mr. Wills, his host. In response to urgent demands from the crowd, Lincoln appeared at the door of the home and made his first Gettysburg speech. He said:

- “I appear before you, my fellow citizens, merely to thank you for this compliment. The inference is a very fair one that you would hear me for a little while at least, were I to commence to make a speech. I do not appear before you for the purpose of doing so, and for several substantial reasons. The most substantial of these is that I have no speech to make. In my position it is somewhat important that I should not say any foolish things. It very often happens that the only way to help it is to say nothing at all. Believing that is my present position this evening, I must beg of you to excuse me from addressing you further.”
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An Unlovely Setting

GETTYSBURG was an unlovely place on November 19, 1863. The trees, shorn of their limbs, gave evidence of the fearful struggle which had occurred there. The symmetry of the burial acres, with its semi-circular arrangement of lots, was entirely lost in the uneven newly made mounds with their crude markers. Interments were still being made as hastily prepared graves were being discovered from day to day. These physical surroundings contributed much to the solemnness of the gathering.

The speakers' platform added little to the decorative features of the occasion. It was forty feet square and stood on the site now occupied by the Gettysburg National Monument. The platform faced away from the cemetery, however, so that the people assembled to hear the program would not be standing on that portion of the grounds where the soldiers were buried.

The day itself, however, was a beautiful one and this contrib-

uted much to the comfort of the people. But the brightness of the sun only accentuated the ugliness of the place which is now so beautiful and serene.

A Few Appropriate Remarks

WHEN Lincoln was invited to make "a few appropriate remarks," as the letter of invitation addressed to him stated, it was apparently decided in Lincoln's mind that in one respect, at least, he would abide by the literal request of the committee—his remarks would be few.

Lincoln's words were few, two hundred and sixty-five, to be exact, according to the most dependable stenographic report. James Grant Wilson claims it took "precisely one hundred and thirty-five seconds" to deliver the message. The President, a few days previous to leaving for Gettysburg had confided to a friend that his address was to be "short—short—short."

The brevity of the message was not the most surprising characteristic of it, although it is said a photographer who planned to make a picture of Lincoln while speaking had insufficient time to get the camera adjusted before the address was over.

The apparent care with which Lincoln had prepared the small part he was to take on the program was the outstanding feature of his efforts. As on occasions of similar dedications, according to Secretary Nicolay, the people were expecting "a few perfunctory words, the mere formality of official dedication."

A formal statement by the President beginning, "as President of the United States I hereby, etc.," would have been appropriate but it was just like Lincoln to make something very beautiful out of a commonplace task. Without comment on what had been

said before, without apology for lack of time, in simple and sympathetic words, he consecrated the burial field as "a final resting place for those who here gave their lives."

"Under God"

ALL public speakers are aware that there comes to one spontaneously, on occasions of unusual emotional experiences, expressions which may have been lying dormant for years, apparently waiting for the proper moment to find voice.

Lincoln's preliminary draft of the Gettysburg Address makes no mention of Deity, and this has been made a great point by those who would prefer to have it so. Every stenographic report of what Lincoln actually said, however, puts in the expression "under God" as having been spoken by the President.

Back in Lincoln's childhood days, he had been greatly impressed by Weems' story of George Washington and he was able to quote many passages from this inspirational biography. Weems had one expression which he frequently used in his book, a word couplet—"under God." It was in the midst of Lincoln's final declaration that these two words sprang forth to hallow the entire address with the atmosphere of reverence.

Government---Of, By, For---The People

OF TIMES a gem needs but the proper setting to bring out its brilliancy and full worth. Government of, by, and for the people was no new idea conceived by Abraham Lincoln, but he placed this jewel of democratic idealism as a crowning thought within the most eloquent oration of modern days.

Five years before Gettysburg, Lincoln acquired two pamphlets

containing addresses by Theodore Parker, delivered in 1858. In one of Parker's speeches, Lincoln underlined this statement: "Democracy—The All Man Power; government over all, by all, and for the sake of all." The other pamphlet contained a sermon delivered by Parker in Music Hall, Boston, on July 4, 1858, and these words Lincoln enclosed with a pencil: "Democracy is Direct Self-Government over all the people, for all the people, by all the people."

Lincoln may have read in many instances statements which conveyed the thought with which he brought the Gettysburg Address to a close, but this slogan of a free people never had been spoken with more feeling, nor uttered in a more inspirational atmosphere, than on the nineteenth of November, 1863:

"That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Lincoln's Written and Spoken Versions

FIVE different versions of the Gettysburg address, strange to say, were all written or spoken by Abraham Lincoln, and there may have been others equally authentic. They can be identified as (1) preliminary writings, (2) spoken words, and (3) revisory copies. One author has put it like this, "What he intended to say, what he said, what he wished he had said."

It is apparent that one copy of the address, and this one is also revised, by the way, was written preliminary to the delivery of the speech. There is no way of learning how many revisions the speech underwent before it finally was delivered.

The most dependable record of what Lincoln actually said seems to have been made by a member of the Boston commission who went to Gettysburg, instructed to take down in shorthand the words of the President. This he did and his transcription was

not jumbled by telegraph operators or rapid fire typesetters but was carefully and accurately prepared to be included in the commissioner's report.

After the dedication, copies of Lincoln's address were requested by Edward Everett, George Bancroft, and probably others. The writing which he prepared for Everett and the two copies he wrote for Bancroft have been preserved. It is the version in the final Bancroft copy that is most widely used, and it has become known as the authentic Gettysburg Address of Abraham Lincoln. It may be seen in facsimile on the back cover of this booklet.

The Aftermath

EDWARD EVERETT, principal speaker at the dedication, wrote to the President the day following the exercises and complimented him on the timeliness of his remarks. Everett said in part:

"Permit me also to express my great admiration of the thoughts expressed by you, with such eloquent simplicity and appropriateness, at the consecration of the Cemetery. I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes."

Lincoln's reply was as gracious as Mr. Everett's compliment. He wrote:

"I am pleased to know that in your judgment the little I did say was not entirely a failure. I knew Mr. Everett would not fail."

Mr. Everett did not fail in Lincoln's opinion, and more than a year later he was praising the words of Everett at Gettysburg. It is doubtful if Lincoln was ever conscious of the fact that his own Gettysburg Address was the real climax of all American eloquence.

Address delivered at the dedication of the
cemetery at Gettysburg.

Four years and seven years ago our fathers
brought forth on this continent, a new man-
tion, conscious in liberty, and dedicated
to the proposition that all men are cre-
ated equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war,
testing whether that nation, or any nation
so conceived and so dedicated, can long
endure. We are met on a great battle-field
of that war. We have come to dedicate a
portion of that field, as a final resting
place for those who here gave their lives
that that nation might live. It is altogether
fitting and proper that we should
do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not ded-
icate—we can not consecrate—we can not
hallow—this ground. The brave men, liv-
ing and dead, who struggled here, have con-

secrated it, far above our poor power to add
or detract. The world will little note, nor
long remember what we say here, but it can-
not forget what they did here. It is for us
the living, rather, to be dedicated here to
the unfinished work which they who
gave here have thus far so nobly advanced.
It is rather for us to be here dedicated to
the great task remaining before us—that
from these honored dead we take increased
devotion to that cause for which they gave
the last full measure of devotion—that
we here highly resolve that these dead shall
not have died in vain—that this nation,
under God, shall have a new birth of free-
dom—and that government of the people,
by the people, for the people, shall not per-
ish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln.

November 19, 1863.

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